

College of Marin Academic Senate
Student Learning Outcomes Assessment
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The College of Marin Academic Senate and the College of Marin administrative leadership agree that the following statements reflect a mutual understanding of an assessment philosophy and related activities at the college.

I. Why assess student learning outcomes?

The purpose of student learning assessment is to document and improve the college's programs. When we assess our students' learning, we are able to identify which of our teaching practices have been successful and which have not, thus enabling us to modify our teaching practices in order to increase success. When we identify student learning outcomes for our courses and share them with our students, we encourage students to become more actively involved in their own learning.

II. What is assessment?

Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. It involves making expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance. Assessment helps us create a shared academic culture dedicated to assuring and improving the quality of higher education. (AAHE Bulletin 1995)

Assessment is an ongoing process, which ideally permeates the institution. The assessment loop involves both gathering information and using that information to modify and improve teaching and student learning. Outcomes assessment is not for the purpose of evaluating an individual student or a faculty member's performance. Therefore, assessment information will be reported in collective form.

III. Who will conduct outcomes assessment?

It is within the purview of the faculty of College of Marin to identify the core knowledge and skills that our students need to master, in keeping with the college's goals, and to shape, design, and disseminate institutional assessment, as instructed by the Academic Senate.

IV. Who will develop the processes of assessment?

It is within the purview of the faculty of College of Marin to develop the criteria by which student progress may be evaluated. These ongoing processes are open to modification and improvement. Not all assessment need be done in individual classes, and not every faculty member need assess all of the core learning. Faculty shall maintain ownership of student learning outcomes and assessment processes.



V. What will assessment be used for?

At College of Marin, ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes helps us understand, and thereby improve, student learning through informed decision making and planning. More specifically, assessment helps us:

- Improve services, feedback, guidance, and mentoring to students in order to help them better plan and implement their educational programs
- Design and improve programs and courses
- Plan at the department and program level
- Identify shared definitions and measurable benchmarks for evaluating student abilities
- Understand how groups of students experience the college differently and respond appropriately to the needs of all students
- Align and coordinate courses within and across disciplines
- Align and coordinate courses and programs with external institutions' requirements as necessary
- Continuously reflect, refine and modify teaching and learning practices.

Assessment of student learning may include multiple measures. As such, the measures used by department/programs may vary across the college. Specific measures may depend upon both the learning goals and the methods of assessment most appropriate for specific curriculum. Indicators of student learning can be expressed as narratives, a performance, or numbers.

VI. What will assessment not be used for?

Effective assessment relies upon a climate of trust and freedom of inquiry. As faculty at College of Marin, we perform assessments of student learning and control the results of our assessments. Data gathered in support of all learning assessment work shall be aggregated so as to remove the identity of any students, faculty, and/or staff.

Therefore, College of Marin

- Will not use assessment of student learning as an end in itself. Assessment that does not help us promote student learning is a waste of time.
- Will not use assessment of student learning punitively or as a means of determining faculty or staff salaries or rewards. The purpose of assessment is to evaluate student learning, not to reward or punish faculty or staff.
- Will not use any single mode of assessment to answer all questions or strictly determine program decisions.
- Will not use assessment in a way that will impinge upon the academic freedom or professional rights of faculty. Individual faculty members must continue to exercise professional judgment in matters of grading and discipline.
- Is not expected to assess **all** students in order to learn about the effectiveness of our programs and policies; a subset is sufficient.
- Will not assume that assessment is only quantitative. While numerical scales or rubrics (such as the four-point grading scale) can be useful, their accuracy always depends upon the clear understanding of the concepts behind the numbers. We will not assume that assessment is only grading.
- Will not use assessment only to evaluate the end of the student's experience or merely to be accountable to outside parties.
- Will not use student learning outcomes for evaluation of faculty.
- Will not use student learning outcomes data for program/discipline reduction or elimination.



VII. What is the college's role in assessing student learning?

Assessment of student learning can significantly enhance the college's ability to fulfill our mission and goals. Consequently, the college supports assessment of student learning as a valued and important activity and provides successful models for developing assessment.

VIII. How will we use assessment of student learning?

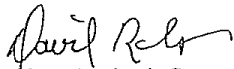
When faculty chooses to assess student learning, we will:

- Always seek multiple methods of assessing student learning rather than relying on any single method.
- Assess those skills, attitudes, behaviors and knowledge that our faculty judges to be important and valuable.
- Assess the ongoing progress of students throughout their experience at College of Marin.
- Use assessment processes and instruments to accommodate and encourage creativity and originality shown by students.
- Explain the purposes of assessment so that staff, students, and the community can see why assessment is being used.

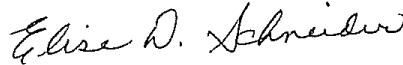
In conclusion, faculty shall control the entire process of assessment of student learning in their own programs. This process includes the selection of the methods chosen or designed for assessment of student learning, administration of the assessment, analysis of the assessment data, and use of the assessment results.

This document is based upon the work done by Palomar College, Modesto Junior College, Coastline Community College, and El Camino College.

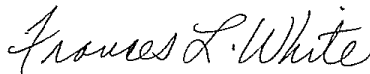
Approved by the College of Marin Academic Senate on October 20, 2005.



President, Academic Senate



College of Marin Vice President of Academic Affairs



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